

CONFIDENTIAL

15 January 1951

Mr. W. Park Armstrong, Jr.
Special Assistant to the Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Park:

Thank you very much for your letter of
12 January 1951, enclosing the report on "Kenneth
de Courcy and the Intelligence Digest".

I have found the report interesting, and
shall bring it to General Smith's attention upon
his return.

Sincerely,

SI - deep via EK
WILLIAM H. JACKSON *1/16/51*

JSE:fm

DIST:

Orig & 1 - addressee
2 cc - signer *(custodian)*
1 cc - Central Records

DOCUMENT NO. 3
NO CHANGES IN CLASSIFICATION
☐ FOR REVIEW
CLASSIFICATION
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 2011
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE 12/2/81 REVIEWER: 018373

CONFIDENTIAL

State Department review completed

SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

R

JAN 30 1961

Dear General Smith:

In view of interest frequently expressed in The Intelligence Digest, and its publisher Kenneth de Courcy, it occurred to me that you might be interested in reading the attached report. Copies have also been furnished to your staff through the regular distribution channels.

Sincerely yours,

W. Park Armstrong, Jr.
W. Park Armstrong, Jr.

Att.

Lieutenant General Walter Bedell Smith
Director of Central Intelligence,
Washington, D. C.

DOCUMENT NO. 2
NO OTHERS IN CLASS ☒
☐ EXCLUDED
DATE 12/49 REVISION: 010012

Copy No. 120CONFIDENTIAL

KENNETH DE COURCY
 AND THE
INTELLIGENCE DIGEST

This report has been prepared in response to
 the numerous requests received in the Department
 for information concerning Kenneth de Courcy
 and his publication the Intelligence Digest.

Biographic Information Research Report No. 500

JANUARY 8, 1951

DOCUMENT NO. 1
 NO CHANGE IN CLASS ☒
☐ DECLASSIFIED
 CLASS. CHANGE NO. 2016
 NEXT REVIEW DATE:
 AUTH: NO 702
 DATE 12/2/81 REVIEWER: 610573

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Division of Biographic Information
 Office of Libraries and Intelligence Acquisition

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

1

KENNETH DE COURCY AND THE INTELLIGENCE DIGESTUNITED KINGDOM

Described by a Belgian publication as a "marchand de panique" and by Prime Minister Attlee as "a help to those who wish to confuse us and lower our morale", Kenneth de Courcy has achieved widespread notoriety as the publisher of the Intelligence Digest.

1. The Intelligence Digest

The Intelligence Digest is the American edition of a British publication which was originally the organ of the Imperial Policy Group (IPG), an extreme right-wing conservative organization formed in 1934. This group, in the formation of which Kenneth de Courcy played a leading role, has frequently implied that it was connected with the Conservative Party, which the latter repeatedly denied. The IPG was opposed to the League of Nations, was pro-Mussolini, pro-Franco and pro-Chamberlain (the Munich pact was hailed as a triumph of diplomacy) and strongly anti-Russian, even after the invasion of the USSR by Germany. After 1940, however, the publication ceased to be the organ of the IPG, but still claimed, misleadingly, to enjoy the support of a number of prominent Conservatives in the House of Commons, and the government was on several occasions urged by members of the House to take action against the publication. Although several responsible Conservatives, including the Minister of Information, expressed extreme distaste for the journal and felt that it was performing a distinct disservice to the war effort, no action was taken against the paper, partly because its circulation was extremely small and its audience restricted. De Courcy's partiality for the friends of appeasement, and especially his intimate ties with Vichy, combined with his thirst for secret information, aroused serious misgivings that military and political secrets might reach the enemy through his neutral friends, and he was closely watched.

The English version of the Digest has enjoyed an extremely limited success. The American edition on the other hand has a growing circulation. De Courcy claims a circulation of 100,000, but 50,000 appears to be a more realistic figure, with only 7 or 8 thousand paid circulation in the United States. The American Board of the Digest includes Vice Admiral Freeman (USN retired) who maintains cordial relations with Merwin K. Hart, head of the National Economic Council and one of the most vociferous anti-Semites in the country, and de Courcy himself addressed a meeting under the auspices of Hart when he was in the U.S. in 1949. Another board member is an active adherent of the Anglo-Saxon Federation of America, whose periodical Destiny carries material from the Digest. The Anglo-Saxon Federation is the American counterpart of the British-Israel World Federation. These societies believe that the Anglo-Saxons are the ten lost tribes and are therefore the heirs of ancient Israel, the Chosen People of the Bible. Their adherents are to be found among the wealthy. De Courcy himself, whose mother was apparently German and Jewish, is rarely openly anti-Semitic, but is so by implication. Yusuf Bandak, a follower of the ex-Mufti of Jerusalem has used the New York offices of the Digest from time to time at

CONFIDENTIAL

2

the invitation of the Admiral.

De Courcy claims to have a corps of intrepid and selfless agents, risking their lives to bring exclusive intelligence to the Digest readers. This description of his sources of information seems to be completely without foundation. According to highly reliable official sources de Courcy has access to little intelligence which is not available to other journalists. He has good contacts with Russian and Polish emigres and other displaced persons of royalist sympathies. He lunches with ex-Queen Victoria of Spain, Otto von Habsburg visits him, and he entertains Ambassadors at Claridges. His information is in no sense exclusive, and the conclusions he draws from his facts are regarded in reputable circles as highly unreliable and misguided. Early in 1950 de Courcy advertised in an English newspaper offering a substantial sum for information about Russia, and he has made one or two startling predictions about Russian atomic production, one of which proved to be accurate; but British and U.S. official scientific intelligence experts are unimpressed and point to the many items he has also published which are known to be false. De Courcy has a gift for concise, colorful writing, and the knack of exaggerating in a plausible way the amount of information to which he has access. He has no official sources of information whatsoever and no official contacts, although he constantly implies official connections of various kinds.

2. Influence of The Intelligence Digest

De Courcy's influence appears to be confined to the United States, where he has obtained a considerable following in certain groups in the East. His readers are to be found mainly in the prosperous business community. Certain sections of the Catholic Church find him sympathetic, and his flair for publicity has secured him invitations to speak to such groups as the Naval Staff College at Norfolk and the Washington Press Club. In England his stock is extremely low. He is regarded as a charlatan and dangerously irresponsible. The Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, referred to him in the following terms: "I do not think we should pay too much heed to some of the alarmist stories which are being spread about, particularly by a paper called 'Intelligence Digest' which is edited by a gentleman called Mr. Kenneth de Courcy. It is believed in some quarters. It maintained in its February (1950) edition, that a bomb explosion, possibly a hydrogen bomb test, took place in the Soviet Union on the night of 7 January. In its March edition, it said that the Soviet Union had exploded one hydrogen bomb and had two others in stock. As to the statements of alleged fact, the Government's advisers on scientific matters have concluded that there was no explosion on the night of 7 January and it would seem to be impossible for the Russians yet to have produced the hydrogen bomb. We cannot afford to be complacent, but the dissemination of scare stories and unreliable information of this sort only helps those who wish to confuse us and lower our morale. I hope honorable Members in all parts of the House will take the opportunity, whenever it offers, of squashing this kind of report. I assure the right honorable Gentlemen that this paper has quite a large circulation, particularly, I think in the United States. It is very mischievous."

British Security has a comprehensive dossier on Kenneth de Courcy

CONFIDENTIAL

3

which is highly classified and is not available to the Foreign Office. The Foreign Office regards de Courcy with active suspicion and its missions abroad have instructions to afford him minimum facilities when he travels.

3. Kenneth de Courcy

According to Who's Who and other published sources, Kenneth de Courcy was born in 1909 at Oldham in Lancashire, the second son of Stephen de Courcy, but there appears to be no evidence to support this claim. He describes his mother as Wilhelmina Schafer, great granddaughter of the Marquis d'Olier de Verneuil, a title which has apparently never existed. A distant relative of Lord Kingsale, Premier Baron of Ireland, Stephen de Courcy was an evangelical who ran a mission in Manchester; he was killed when Kenneth was two years old so that Kenneth was brought up entirely by his mother who lived with him until her death early in 1950. Mrs. de Courcy was the author of numerous religious pamphlets. She is thought to have maintained a strong hold on her younger son, and the fact that he announced his engagement shortly after her death and was married the following August strengthens the report that she was opposed to his marriage.

Kenneth was educated privately and attended King's College School for a time. He travelled extensively as a young man and in 1930 held a Commission in the Coldstream Guards for a few months. He did not serve in any capacity during World War II, but this may have been due to a physical disability. The Times Court Circular, in which de Courcy announces his comings and goings, reported several times during the war years that he was entering a nursing home for treatment of a recurring throat ailment.

De Courcy's career seems to have begun in 1933 when he became secretary to Sir Reginald Mitchell Banks' unofficial committee on conservative policy. The following year he took an active part in the formation of the Imperial Policy Group, along with such arch-conservatives as Lord Mansfield, Viscount Clive, Lord Phillimore, Victor Raikes, M.P. and Lt. Col. A.R. Wise. He travelled widely in the following years, interviewed Mussolini, Benes, Schuschnigg and King Boris of Bulgaria, among other notables. He also seems to have been connected with a kind of travel agency which organized luxurious conducted tours for rich businessmen and introduced them to famous public figures abroad. Lord Mansfield appears to have participated in such a trip. De Courcy is still engaged in these ventures and Count Adam Romer, formerly attached to the Polish Government-in-Exile in London, is his present associate in these activities. De Courcy lists himself as Chairman of Ridgway, Courcy and Co., Ltd. which is reported to be a chain of tobacco shops whose early financing was materially assisted by Lord Mansfield. Some authorities feel that this is the chief source of de Courcy's income. Others claim that he makes his money by his writing and that a company originally started as a travel agency in 1931 by an American, and later taken over by the de Courcy brothers, is behind the Intelligence Digest. The late Viscount Charlemont, former Minister of Education in Northern Ireland is reported to have supplied 1,000 of the total 1,500 pounds of the original capital of this company. The Review of World Affairs, of which the Intelligence Digest is the descendant, was however originally the organ of the Imperial

CONFIDENTIAL

4

Policy Group, and de Courcy still has several of the members of this group on the board of the publication, although all connections with the group as such appear to have ended around 1940.

De Courcy lives and travels in the style of a very rich man. He has a town house in Belgravia, and a country estate called Alderbourne Manor in Buckinghamshire. He calls himself Lord of the Manors of Stow on the Wold and Nangersbury, drives a Rolls Royce, has a private chapel in which he was married, and employs a butler and a footman. His house is filled with paintings, surrealistic as well as more conventional works; he also has two great Danes. He entertains lavishly both at his house and at Claridges, where Ambassadors, Church dignitaries, Army men and refugee royalty rub shoulders at lunch. He has on more than one occasion visited the Netherlands Royal family for the week-end, but his associates are more generally the emissaries of the smaller and more reactionary powers.

Along with his literary and business enterprises de Courcy also interests himself in religious matters. He is an official of numerous religious film, publishing and settlement enterprises and has organized more than one mass revival meeting at the Albert Hall, as well as several smaller and highly select religious week-ends at his country house. Although by his own accounts he secured the patronage of many distinguished personages, his meetings do not appear to have been an outstanding success and received no notice in the press. British press circles, however, have a very poor opinion of de Courcy and rarely afford him the publicity he so assiduously courts. He has often been reported to be a Roman Catholic, but this does not appear to be the case. He was married recently in his own chapel, and among the numerous ministers officiating at this ceremony was the Dean of Windsor, a dignitary of the Church of England. It seems probable that de Courcy is an Anglo-Catholic, and he appears to have close ties with the British Israelites. He talks of the imminence of the Second Coming as foretold in the Bible, the recent atomic explosions being the severe physical disturbances which were to precede this event. He explains that the terms used to describe atomic chain reactions are derived from the same Greek roots as the words the Greek Testament uses to describe the manifestations which will herald the Second Coming. He avers that the Millennium is at hand.

In 1950 de Courcy visited the United States and in several speeches stressed the need for recognition by the democratic countries of resurgent German aspirations and the immediate resumption of relations with Franco. He praised the quality of the Spanish armed forces, and stated categorically that Spain was the only country which could be counted on by America as an ally in her coming struggle with the USSR. In this stricture he specifically included his own country, whose government he described as "rotten". He further urged that the United States drop atom bombs on the Russian oil fields around Baku, since the Soviets were known to be short of oil. This the U.S. must do at once if she is to prevent the USSR from overtaking her in atomic production and gaining a lead in this field, as she has already done in the field of supersonic and guided missiles, according to de Courcy's own exclusive intelligence.

Kenneth de Courcy is inordinately proud of his connections with the Kingsale family and never loses an opportunity to draw attention to this relationship. He is in fact a sixth cousin seven times removed,

CONFIDENTIAL

5

and reliable sources have reported that the Kingsales are not at all proud of their distant cousin. However de Courcy is apparently the guardian of Michael de Courcy, the heir to this ancient title. Michael lives with his guardian and works on the Intelligence Digest as an "apprentice". He is the grandson of the present Baron, his father having been killed in action in 1940. Michael's mother was divorced by his father in 1933 and despite the lurid amours of both his parents as outlined in the divorce proceedings Michael appears to have remained with his mother, losing touch with his father's family. When the father was killed Kenneth de Courcy traced the child and brought him to live with him, and in some manner involving the services of many lawyers, became his guardian. Michael is still a minor and in the summer of 1950 his marriage was postponed at the last minute because of someone's failure to comply with the prearranged legal formalities, and the Kingsale family announced their intention of placing Michael in Chancery until his majority in 1951. However, relations between the Kingsales and Kenneth de Courcy do not appear to be badly strained; according to an announcement in the Times Lord Kingsale was present at his wedding in August 1950.

Physically de Courcy is small and slight and unimpressive. He has a ruddy complexion, thick, shiny fair hair and a military moustache. Some of his photographs, particularly one he uses for publicity purposes, are quite misleading. He affects many of Winston Churchill's mannerisms of speech and grasps his lapels as he talks. He is a fluent and facile speaker and may be effective in a small group. His platform manner is lacking in magnetism however, and he does not carry the force of conviction necessary to sway a large audience.

OLI:BI:EJRudlin:rrl

BIRR 500
January 2, 1951